

# NEWS RELEASE

*OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS*

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*For Immediate Release— July 9, 2004*

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Ronald J. Tenpas, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced today the indictment of 20 individuals in federal charges that address methamphetamine production and distribution around Wayne and White County, Illinois. 19 of the 20 are in custody as of 7:00 a.m. after pre-dawn arrests on Friday morning, July 9, 2004.

Those arrested on Friday were: **Jeffrey D. West**, 41, of RR #5, Box 181, Fairfield, Illinois; **Richard D. Linder**, 36, of P.O. Box 93, Sims, Illinois; **Jason D. Melton**, 34, of RR #3, Box 130, Fairfield, Illinois; **Melinda G. Melton**, 30, of RR #5, Box 301, Fairfield, Illinois; **Kevin W. Melton**, 43, of RR #5, Box 160, Fairfield, Illinois; **Gregory G. Shell**, 41, of RR #1, Keenes, Illinois; **Charles A. Colyer**, 42, of RR #3, Box 275, Fairfield, Illinois; **Daniel S. Atkins**, 45, of RR #3, Box 159, Fairfield, Illinois; **Arthur L. Barton**, 46, of RR #3, Fairfield, Illinois; **Michael L. Alden**, 47, of RR #2, Box 136-A, Xenia, Illinois; **Joseph D. Weccelle**, 45, of P.O. Box 115, Sims, Illinois; **Elmer F. Weccelle**, 48, of RR #5, Box 615, Sims, Illinois; **Jimmie L. White**, 45, of 22601 North Folkart Lane, Bluford, Illinois; **Paula L. Thomas**, 33, of 1213 N.W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Apt. #5B, Fairfield, Illinois; **Monte R. White**, 46, of RR #1, Box 121, Bluford, Illinois; **James A. Williams**, 34, of 236 County Road, 2100 North, Springerton, Illinois; **Michael B. Gregory**, 44, of RR #1, Box 204, Fairfield, Illinois; **Thomas W. Hutcheson, Jr.**, 46, of RR #5, Box 301, Fairfield, Illinois; and

**Jamie L. Vaughn**, 32, of RR #5, Box 253, Fairfield, Illinois. The identity of the individual still at large is not being released at this time.

The indictment alleges that the above-named individuals participated in a conspiracy to manufacture and distribute methamphetamine. The conspiracy is alleged to have existed from the summer of 1995 until June of 2004 in Wayne County, White County “and elsewhere in the Southern District of Illinois.” If convicted by a jury, all defendants face a minimum of 10 years imprisonment up to life imprisonment, a four million dollar fine and at least five years of probation.

An indictment is a formal charge against a defendant. Under the law, a defendant is presumed to be innocent of a charge until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt to the satisfaction of a jury.

The agencies involved in the investigation, or which provided information leading to the indictment, were the Southern Illinois Drug Task Force, the Illinois State Police, the Fairfield Police Department, the Wayne County Sheriff’s Department, the White County Sheriff’s Department, the Hamilton County Sheriff’s Department, The COMIT Drug Task Force, Wayne County State’s Attorney Kevin Kakak, White County State’s Attorney Kerry Sutton, Hamilton County State’s Attorney Wayne Morris, the Illinois Secretary of State Police, the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the United States Marshals Service.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Tom Leggans and Jim Cutchin.